

APPENDIX 1:

POSTFACE TO THE KREUTZER SONATA

I have received, and continue to receive, a large number of letters from people I do not know, asking me to explain in clear, simple terms what I think of the subject of the story I wrote entitled *The Kreutzer Sonata*. This I shall endeavour to do; that is, I shall attempt briefly to express, within the limits of the possible, the substance of what I was trying to say in that story, and the conclusions which in my view may be drawn from it.

The first point I was trying to make was that in our society there has been formed the solid conviction, common to every class and receiving the support of a mendacious science, that sexual intercourse is an activity indispensable to health, and that since marriage is not always a practical possibility, extramarital sexual intercourse, committing a man to nothing except the payment of money, is something perfectly natural and therefore to be encouraged. So firm and widespread has this conviction become that parents, following the advice given by their doctors, make arrangements for the depravation of their children; governments whose sole purpose is to care for the moral welfare of their citizens bring in institutionalized debauchery by regularizing the existence of an entire class of women who are obliged to suffer both physically and emotionally in order to satisfy the imaginary needs of men, so that the unmarried give themselves up to debauchery with a perfectly clear conscience.

And what I was trying to say was that this is not a good state of affairs, for it cannot be right that for the sake of the health of some the bodies and souls of others should be caused to perish, just as it cannot be right that for the sake of the health of some it should be necessary to drink the blood of others.

The conclusion it seems to me natural to draw from this is that one ought not to yield to this delusion, this fraud. And in order not to yield to it, it is necessary, in the first place, not to lend credence to immoral doctrines, whatever the pseudo-sciences that give them their support and, in the second place, to understand that sexual intercourse in which men either extricate themselves from its possible consequences – children – or else shift the entire burden of those consequences on to the woman, or practise contraception – that such intercourse is an offence against the most elementary requirements of morality, is an infamy, and that therefore unmarried men who do not wish to live a life of infamy must not indulge in it.

In order to be able to abstain from it they must, in addition to leading a natural way of life – not drinking, not eating to excess, not eating meat and not shirking physical toil (not gymnastic exercises, but fatiguing, genuine toil) – exclude from their thoughts the possibility of having intercourse with chance women, just as every man excludes such a possibility between himself and his mother, his sisters, his relations and the wives of his friends.

Abstinence is possible, and is less dangerous and injurious to the health than non-abstinence: every man will find around him a hundred proofs of this.

That is the first point.

The second point is that as a result of this view of sexual intercourse as being not only a necessary precondition of health but also a sublime and poetic blessing that life bestows, marital infidelity has become in all the classes of society (especially, thanks to conscription, among the peasantry) a most common occurrence.

The conclusion that follows from this is that men should not act in this way.

In order for men not to act in this way, it is necessary that carnal love be envisaged differently, that men and women be educated by their families and by public opinion in such a way that both before and after marriage they view desire and the carnal love that is associated with it not as a sublime, poetic condition, as they are viewed at present, but as a

condition of animality that is degrading to human beings, and that the violation of the promise of fidelity given at the time of marriage be censured by public opinion in at least the same degree as it censures commercial fraud and the non-payment of debts, and that it not be sung to the skies, as is done at present in novels, poems, songs, operas, etc.

That is the second point.

The *third point* is that in our society, as a consequence of the same false significance accorded to carnal love, procreation has lost its meaning: instead of being the goal and the *raison d'être* of marital relations, it has become no more than an obstacle to the agreeable protraction of love relations. Because of this, and as a result of the advice given by the servants of medical science, there has begun either the spread of an employment of means which prevent the woman from conceiving, or else a certain practice has started to become common, one which did not exist formerly and is still unknown in the patriarchal families of peasants: the extension of marital relations into pregnancy and nursing.

And I think this is a bad thing. It is a bad thing for people to use contraceptive devices, in the first place because it frees them from the care and hard work which children bring and which serve as an expiation of carnal love, and in the second place because this is something very close to the act which is more repugnant to the human conscience than any other: the act of murder. Non-abstinence during pregnancy and nursing is likewise undesirable, because it damages the physical, and more importantly, the emotional strength of the woman.

The conclusion that may be drawn from this is that men should not act in this way. And in order not to act in this way, they must understand that abstinence, which forms the essential condition of human dignity outside marriage, is even more necessary in marriage itself.

That is the third point.

The *fourth point* is that in our society, where children are considered either as a hindrance to pleasure, as an unfortunate accident, or as a particular form of pleasure (when born in predetermined quantities), they are brought up not with any

view to those tasks of human life that may await them as thinking, loving beings, but solely with a view to the enjoyment they may be able to afford their parents. In consequence of this, the children of men are raised like the young of animals, and the principal concern of their parents is not to prepare them for an active life worthy of human beings but (and here the parents receive the support of that mendacious science that is called medicine) to feed them as well as possible, to make them as tall as possible, to make them clean, white, replete and attractive (if this is not done among the lower classes, it is only because necessity will not permit it – their view on the matter is the same). And in these pampered children, just as in all animals that are overfed, there is an unnaturally early appearance of an unmasterable sensuality which is the cause of horrible torments during their adolescence. Their clothes, their books, their entertainments, the music they play and listen to, their dancing, the sweet food they are given, the whole environment of their lives, from the pretty pictures on their tins of candy to the novels, stories and poems they read, inflame their sensuality even more; in consequence, the most fearful sexual vices and illnesses become a normal condition of growing up for children of both sexes, and often retain their grip even in adulthood.

And I think this is a bad thing. The conclusion that may be drawn from it is that we must stop raising the children of men as if they were the young of animals, and set other goals for the education of the children of men than merely an attractive, well-groomed body.

That is the fourth point.

The *fifth point* is that in our society, where the love between a young man and a young woman, the foundation of which is none the less carnality, is elevated into the loftiest poetic goal of all human aspirations (all the art and poetry of our society are the witness), young people devote the best years of their lives, if they are men, to spying out, hunting down and taking possession of the objects most worthy of their love by means of an affair or of marriage, and if they are women and girls, to enticing and drawing men into an affair or marriage.

Because of this the finest energies of human beings are wasted on work that is not only unproductive but also harmful. This is the source of most of the mindless luxury of our day-to-day lives, and it is also the cause of the idleness of our men and the shamelessness of our women who think nothing of parading, in fashions borrowed from prostitutes, those parts of their bodies that excite men's lust.

And I think this is a bad thing. It is a bad thing, because the achievement of union either in marriage or outside it, with the object of one's love, no matter how poeticized, is not a goal that is worthy of human beings, any more than is the goal, considered by many as the highest good imaginable, of procuring large quantities of delectable food for oneself.

The conclusion that may be drawn from this is that we must give up thinking of carnal love as something particularly exalted, and must understand that a goal worthy of man, whether it be the service of mankind, of one's country, of science or of art (not to mention the service of God) is, as soon as we consider it as such, not attained by means of union with the object of our love either inside marriage or outside it; on the contrary, love and union with the object of that love (no matter how hard people may try to prove the opposite in verse and prose) never make the achievement of a goal worthy of man any easier, but always render it more difficult.

That is the fifth point.

This is the substance of what I was trying to say, and of what I thought I had indeed said, in my story. It seemed to me that while one might argue about the best way of remedying the evil designated in the above propositions, it was impossible for anyone not to agree with them.

It seemed to me impossible that anyone would not agree with these propositions in the first place because they are fully in accord with the progress of humanity, which has always proceeded from libertinage towards an ever greater degree of chastity, and with the moral awareness of society, with our conscience, which always condemns licentiousness and esteems chastity; and in the second place because these propositions are merely the inevitable conclusions to be drawn

from the Gospels, which we profess, or at least admit to be the basis of our conception of morality.

Things have turned out differently, however.

No one, it is true, contests outright the propositions that one must not indulge in lust either before marriage or after it, that one must not prevent conception by artificial means, make of one's children an entertainment, and place the love-bond higher than all else – in short, no one will deny that chastity is better than libertinage. But people say: 'If celibacy is better than marriage, then it follows that people must do what is better. But if they do it, the human race will come to an end, and surely the ideal of the human race cannot be its own extinction?'

But quite apart from the fact that the extinction of the human race is not a new idea for mankind, that for the religious it is an article of faith and for the scientifically inclined an inevitable deduction to be drawn from observations concerning the cooling of the sun, there is concealed in this objection a grave, widespread and ancient misunderstanding.

People say: 'If human beings attain the ideal of complete chastity, they will cease to exist, and so this ideal must be a false one.' But those who talk like this are, wittingly or unwittingly, confusing two things that are different in nature: the law – or precept – and the ideal.

Chastity is neither a law nor a precept but an ideal, or rather one of the preconditions of an ideal. An ideal is only genuine, however, when its realization is only possible in idea, in thought, when it is only attainable in the infinite and when, consequently, the possibility of approaching it is an infinite one. If there were an ideal that was not only attainable but could be imagined by us as being attainable it would cease to be an ideal. Such is the ideal of Christ – the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth, the ideal, already announced by the prophets, concerning the advent of a time when all men, instructed by God, will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks, the lion will lie down with the lamb and all beings will be united by love. The entire meaning of human existence

is contained in the movement towards this ideal, and thus not only does the striving towards the Christian ideal in its totality and towards chastity as one of the preconditions of that ideal not exclude the possibility of life; on the contrary, it is the absence of this Christian ideal that would put an end to that forward movement and consequently to the possibility of life.

The opinion that the human race would cease to exist if people were to devote all their energies to the attainment of chastity is similar to the opinion (still held today) that the human race would perish if people, instead of continuing the struggle for existence, were to devote all their energies to loving their friends, their enemies and the whole of living creation. Such opinions stem from a lack of understanding of the difference between two types of moral guidance.

Just as there are two ways of indicating to the traveller the path he should follow, so there are two methods of moral guidance for the person who is seeking the truth. One of these consists in pointing out to the person the landmarks he must encounter, and in him setting his course by these landmarks. The other method consists simply in giving the person a reading on the compass he carries with him; he keeps this reading steady as he travels, and by means of it he is able to perceive his slightest deviation from the correct path.

The first type of moral guidance makes use of external precepts, or rules: the person is given the clearly defined characteristics of actions he must and must not perform.

'Keep the sabbath, practise circumcision, do not steal, do not drink alcohol, do not kill, give a tenth of what you own to the poor, do not commit adultery, make your ablutions and say your prayers five times a day, be baptized, take communion,' and so on. Such are the precepts of the external religious doctrines: the Brahminic, the Buddhist, the Muslim, the Hebraic and the Ecclesiastic, mistakenly referred to as the Christian.

The second type of guidance consists in showing the person a state of perfection impossible for him to attain, the striving for which he acknowledges in himself: he is shown the ideal,

and he is forever able to measure the degree of distance that separates him from it.

'Love thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy mind, and love thy neighbour as thyself. Be perfect like your Heavenly Father.'

Such is the doctrine of Christ.

One can only verify the fulfilment of the external religious doctrines by the concordance of men's actions with the requirements of those doctrines; such a concordance is possible.

One may verify the fulfilment of the doctrine of Christ by one's awareness of the degree of distance that separates one from the ideal of perfection. (The degree of approximation is not visible: all that can be seen is the distance that separates a human being from perfection.)

A person who follows the external law is like someone standing in the light of a lantern that is suspended from a post. He stands in the light shed by this lantern, its light is sufficient for him, and he has no need to go any further. A person who follows the teaching of Christ is like someone carrying a lantern before him on the end of a pole of indeterminate length: its light is always in front of him, it constantly prompts him to follow it and at each moment reveals to him a new expanse of terrain that draws him towards it.

The Pharisee thanks God for the fact that he is able to fulfil all his duties.

A rich young man may have fulfilled all his duties ever since his childhood, and yet be unable to see that he is lacking in anything. Such young men cannot think otherwise: there is no goal before them towards which they might continue to strive. They have given away a tenth of what they own, they have kept the sabbath, they have honoured their father and mother, they have not committed adultery, theft or murder. What more is left to them? For the person who follows the teaching of Christ, however, the attainment of any degree of perfection makes it necessary for him to climb to a higher

degree, from whence a yet higher degree is revealed to him, and so it continues.

The person who follows the doctrine of Christ is perpetually in the situation of the publican. He always feels imperfect; he cannot see behind him the path he has already travelled; instead, he constantly sees in front of him the path along which he has still to go.

Herein lies the difference between the doctrine of Christ and all the other religious doctrines. It is not a difference in moral demands, but in the way human beings are guided. Christ laid down no rules as to how one should live one's life; he never established any institutions, not even the institution of marriage. But people who do not understand the special nature of the doctrine of Christ, people who are accustomed to external doctrines and who want to feel righteous in the way that the Pharisee feels righteous have, contrary to the entire spirit of the doctrine of Christ, interpreted his teachings according to the letter, and constructed a body of external precepts called ecclesiastical Christian doctrine, and have substituted this for Christ's authentic doctrine of the ideal.

In the place of Christ's doctrine of the ideal the ecclesiastical teaching calling itself Christian has, with regard to every manifestation of life, instituted external rules and precepts which are alien to the spirit of that doctrine. It has done this with regard to the authority of the State, justice, the armed forces, the Church and the holy ritual, and also with regard to marriage: in spite of the fact that not only did Christ never advocate marriage, but, if one looks to the matter of external precepts, took a negative attitude towards it ('leave thy wife and follow me'), the ecclesiastical doctrine which calls itself Christian has established marriage as a Christian institution; in other words, it has determined certain external conditions in which carnal love is supposed not to contain any sin for the Christian, and to be completely lawful.

But since there is no basis in the true Christian doctrine for the institution of marriage, the result has been that the people of our world have fallen between two stools: they do not really

believe in the ecclesiastical dispositions concerning marriage, for they sense that this institution has no basis in Christian doctrine, and at the same time they lose sight of Christ's ideal, which is now obscured by the teaching of the Church, they lose sight of the ideal of chastity, and are left without any guidance where marriage is concerned. Hence there arises a phenomenon that seems at first sight strange: among the Jews, the Muslims, the Lamaists and others who profess religious doctrines of a far lower order than the Christian one, but who have precise external rules governing marriage, the family principle and conjugal fidelity are incomparably more deep-rooted than they are among us so-called Christians.

They practise a form of concubinage, a polygamy that is regulated within certain limits. Among us, on the other hand, there exist outright licence and concubinage, polygamy and polyandry, subject to no rules and disguised as monogamy.

Solely because, in exchange for money, the clergy performs a special ceremony, called Christian marriage, over the heads of a certain number of couples, the people of our world imagine, either naively or hypocritically, that they are living in a state of monogamy.

There never has been and there never will be a Christian marriage, just as there never has been nor can there be a Christian ritual (*Matthew vi, 5–12; John iv, 21*), Christian teachers and fathers (*Matthew xxiii, 8–10*), Christian property, or a Christian army, justice of State. This was always understood by the true Christians of the earliest times, and by those who lived thereafter.

The Christian's ideal is the love of God and of one's neighbour; it is the renunciation of self for the service of God and of one's neighbour. Marriage and carnal love are, on the other hand, the service of oneself and are therefore in all cases an obstacle to the service of God and men – from the Christian point of view they represent a fall, a sin.

The contraction of marriage cannot promote the service of God and men even when the partners have as their aim the propagation of the human species. It would make much more sense if such people, instead of entering into marriage in order

to produce children, were to sustain and rescue those millions of children who are perishing all round us because of a lack not of spiritual, but of material food.

A Christian could only enter into a marriage without any consciousness of having fallen or sinned if he could be absolutely certain that the lives of all existing children were assured.

It is possible not to accept the doctrine of Christ, that doctrine which impregnates the whole of our lives and on which our entire morality is based; if, however, one does accept it, one cannot but recognize that it points towards the ideal of total chastity.

The Gospels, after all, tell us quite plainly and without any possibility of misinterpretation that a married man must not divorce his wife in order that he may take another, but must live with the one he originally married (Matthew v,31-2; xix,8); second, that it is a sin in general, and thus just as much for the man who is married as for the man who is not, to look upon a woman as an object of pleasure (Matthew v,28-9), and third, that it is better for a man who is single not to marry at all, to remain, that is, completely chaste (Matthew xix,10-12).

To very many people these ideas appear strange and even contradictory. And indeed they are contradictory, but not of one another; they contradict our entire way of life, so that involuntarily a doubt arises: Who is right? These ideas, or the lives of millions of people, our own included? I experienced this very same feeling most acutely when I was in the process of arriving at the convictions I am now setting forth: I never expected that the train of my thoughts would lead me where it did. I was horrified at my conclusions. I tried not to lend them any credence, but that was impossible. However much they might contradict the entire fabric of our lives, however much they might contradict all that I had previously thought and even said aloud, I had no alternative but to accept them.

'But these are all merely general reflections, and they may very well be correct; however, they relate to the doctrine of Christ and are obligatory only for those who profess it; after all, life is life, and one cannot, having pointed to the unattain-

able ideal of Christ, abandon people at the heart of a problem that is one of the most urgent, universal and productive of catastrophes with nothing but his ideal, yet at the same time fail to provide them with any sort of guidance.'

'A young man, full of enthusiasm, will be carried away by this ideal at first, but he will not persevere, he will break loose and, no longer taking account of any kind of rules, will sink into utter depravity.'

That is how people usually reason.

'The ideal of Christ is unattainable, and so it cannot serve us as a guide in our lives; it can be talked and dreamed about, but it cannot be applied to life, and so it should be left alone. What we need is not an ideal, but rules and guidance that are within our power to follow, that are within the power of the average moral level of society to follow: honest marriage in church, or even marriage that is not completely honest, where one of the partners – in our case, the man – has already had relations with a large number of women, even civil marriage, or even (following the same logic) the Japanese type of marriage, which only lasts for a definite period of time – why not go the whole way, and allow licensed brothels?'

People say that this is better than allowing debauchery in the streets. That is precisely the trouble: once one has permitted oneself to lower an ideal to the level of one's own weakness, one can no longer discern the limits beyond which one should not go.

This line of argument is mistaken right from the outset; above all, it is mistaken to assert that an ideal of absolute perfection cannot be a guiding force in our lives, and that in its presence we must either wave it aside, saying it is of no use to us because we will never be able to attain it, or lower it to the level our weakness desires.

To argue in this way is to be like a navigator who tells himself that since he cannot follow the course indicated by his compass he will throw his compass away or stop paying any attention to it (abandon his ideal, in other words), or else that he will fix the needle of his compass on the point that corresponds to the course of his vessel at any given moment

(lower his ideal to the level of his weakness, that is). The ideal of perfection set by Christ is not a dream or a subject for rhetorical sermonizing – it is a most necessary and universally accessible form of guidance for the moral conduct of men's lives, just as the compass is a necessary and accessible instrument for the guidance of the navigator; all that is required in either case is for one to believe that this is so. In whatever situation a person may find himself, the doctrine of the ideal set by Christ will always be sufficient for him to be able to receive the most reliable indication of those actions he must or must not perform. But he must believe in this doctrine completely, and in this doctrine alone, he must give up believing in all the others, just as the navigator must believe his compass, and cease to look at and be guided by what he sees to either side of him. A person must know how to be guided by Christian doctrine as by a compass, and for this he must above all be sure of his own situation, and not be afraid to determine precisely how far he has diverged from the ideal course. At whatever level a person finds himself, it will always be possible for him to approach this ideal, and he can never attain a situation where he can say that he has reached it and is unable to come any closer to it. Such is the nature of man's striving for the Christian ideal in general, and for chastity in particular. If, where the problem of sexuality is concerned, one envisages to oneself all the different situations – from the innocence of childhood up to marriage – in which abstinence is not practised, at each stage of the way between these two situations the doctrine of Christ and the ideal it represents will always serve as a clear and definite guide as to what a person should or should not do.

What should pure, young, adolescent lads or girls do? They should remain free of temptation and, in order to be able to devote all their energies to the service of God and men, strive for an ever greater chastity of thought and intention.

What should pure, young, adolescent lads or girls do, who have fallen prey to temptation, are swallowed up by thoughts of an objectless love or by a love for a specific person, and have thus lost a certain part of their ability to serve God and man?

The same thing: not connive at a further fall, in the knowledge that such connivance will not deliver them from temptation but merely reinforce it, and continue to strive towards an ever greater degree of chastity in order to be able to serve God and men more fully.

What are those people to do who have been vanquished in this struggle and have fallen? They should consider their fall not as a legitimate source of enjoyment, as is done at the present time when it is absolved by the rite of marriage, nor as a carnal pleasure in which they can indulge repeatedly with others, nor as a misfortune, when the fall occurs with someone not their equal or without the consecration of marriage, but regard this initial fall as the only one, as the contraction of an indissoluble marriage.

For those who are able to enter upon it, this contraction of marriage, together with its consequences – the birth of children – specifies a new and more limited form of the service of God and men directly, in the most various forms; the contraction of marriage reduces the scope of man's action and obliges him to rear and educate his offspring, which is composed of future servants of God and men.

What are a man and woman to do who are living together in marriage and performing this limited service of God and men through the rearing and education of their children, consequent upon their situation?

The same thing: they should strive together to free themselves from temptation, to make themselves pure, abstain from sin, and replace conjugal relations, which are opposed to the general and the particular service of God and men, replace carnal love with the pure relations that exist between a brother and a sister.

Thus it is not true to say that we cannot be guided by the ideal of Christ, because it is too exalted, too perfect and unattainable. The only reason we can fail to be guided by it is because we lie to ourselves and deceive ourselves.

Indeed, when we tell ourselves that we need rules that are more practicable than the ideal of Christ, that if we fail to attain this ideal we sink into debauchery, what we are saying

is not that the ideal of Christ is too exalted for us, but only that we do not believe in it and do not want to make our actions conform to it.

When we say that having once fallen we will sink into debauchery, all we are really saying is that we have already decided beforehand that a fall with someone who is not our equal is not a sin but an amusement, a diversion which we are not obliged to atone for by what we call marriage. On the other hand, if we could only understand that such a fall is a sin which must and can be redeemed only by the indissolubility of marriage and by the whole of the activity involved in the rearing of the children born of that marriage, our fall can never be the cause of our sinking into debauchery.

This is, after all, just the same as if a farmer were not to consider those seeds which failed to germinate as seeds at all, but only the ones that, sown elsewhere, gave a yield. It seems obvious that such a person would waste a great deal of land and seed, and would never learn how to sow. As soon as one makes of chastity an ideal and realizes that every fall, no matter who the partners in it are, is a unique marriage that shall remain indissoluble for the whole of one's life, it becomes clear that the guidance given by Christ is not only sufficient, but is the only guidance that is possible.

'Man is weak, he must be set a task that is within his power,' people say. This is just the same as saying: 'My hands are weak, I cannot draw a line that is straight, the shortest one between two points, that is, and so, in order to make it easier for myself, instead of drawing the straight line I should like to draw, I shall take as my model a crooked or a broken line.'

The weaker my hand is, the greater is my need of a model that is perfect.

It is impossible, once one has understood the Christian doctrine of the ideal, to behave as if one were ignorant of it and to replace it by external precepts. The Christian doctrine of the ideal has been revealed to mankind precisely because it is capable of guiding mankind at the stage it has presently reached. Mankind has outgrown the era of external religious precepts, and no one believes in them any more.

The Christian doctrine of the ideal is the only doctrine that is capable of guiding mankind. One cannot, one must not, replace the ideal of Christ by external rules; on the contrary, one must keep this ideal firmly before one in all its purity and, most important of all, one must believe in it.

One may say, to a man who is navigating close to the shore: 'Steer by that rise, that cape, that tower,' and so on. But there comes a moment when the navigators sail away from the shore and only the unattainable stars and the compass may indicate the direction they should follow, and serve as their guides. We have been given both.